

GRANTEE MONITORING

Grantee Name	Choices Pregnancy Center #285532
Location/Address	231 E 2 nd Street, PO Box 22, Redwood Falls, MN
Date and Location of Site Visit	October 12, 2016
Grantee Participants	Karen Boots, Exec. Director, Gwenn Harrington, EWYL coordinator
MDH Participant(s)	Mary Ottman, Positive Alternatives Grant Manager
Grant Agreement #/PO #	#109497

PURPOSE:

In accordance with the MDH Policy 238.01 Grantee Monitoring, MDH will conduct at least one monitoring visit per grant period on all state grants of over \$50,000, and at least annual monitoring visits on grants of over \$250,000.

The purpose of the grant monitoring visit is to review and ensure progress against the grants' goals, to address any problems or issues before the end of the grant period and to build rapport between the state agency and the grantees. This visit may cover topics such as statutory compliance; challenges faced by the grantee, modifications made to the grant program, program outcomes, grantee policies and procedures, grantee governance, and training and technical assistance needs.

The findings or information obtained through this monitoring activity will be used:

- To ascertain how MDH program funds are being utilized
- To provide targeted technical assistance needs
- To improve program implementation performance
- To suggest other training needs
- In future funding decisions

OVERVIEW

1. Is the Grantee's non-profit 501(c) 3 status current?

Yes

GRANTEE MONITORING

2. Does the Grantee have a central file containing the official records for this grant agreement and/or amendment? [Yes](#)
3. Where is this central file located? [Director's office desk and computer files](#)
4. Who is responsible for this central file? [Executive Director](#)
5. Does the central file include
 - The grant proposal? [Yes](#)
 - The award letter? [Yes](#)
 - The signed grant agreement and any/all amendments? [Yes](#)
 - Any/all requests and/or approvals for scope/budget changes? [Yes](#)
 - The work plan? [Yes](#)
 - Any/all payment requests (invoices)? [Yes](#)
 - Any/all signed subcontracts? Not applicable (no subcontracts) [Yes](#)
 - Any/all Progress Reports? [Yes](#)

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

1. Does the organization meet all reporting requirements as outlined in the grant agreement and/or amendment?
[Yes](#)
2. Are expenditure reports submitted timely and accurately?
[Yes](#)
3. Are progress reports submitted with all required information and in a timely manner?
[Yes](#)

GRANTEE MONITORING

CONTRACTUAL

1. Does the Grantee have written policies or procedures addressing use of contractors and/or subcontractors?

The organization is working on reviewing and writing new policies.

2. Were any sub-contractors paid from the MDH grant required to sign a contractual agreement outlining services to be rendered, duration of engagement, and pay rate?

Yes, a subcontract has been submitted for a media consultant.

3. Was the contractual agreement(s) reviewed and approved by MDH before implementation?

Yes

PERSONNEL POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES OF THE GRANTEE

1. Are time distribution records (e.g., time-sheets) maintained to show how employees who are funded through, or contributed in kind to, the MDH grant and who work on multiple projects/programs spend their time? Yes

2. Do personnel and/or payroll records show dates of hire/termination, immigration status if applicable, actual hours of time worked, leave time, federal and state programs worked on, and earning for all employees who are funded through, or contributed in kind, to the MDH grant? Yes

3. Does the Grantee have policies and procedures in writing regarding:

- Payroll? Yes
- Travel? Yes
- Overtime? Yes
- Timesheets? Yes
- Taxes? Yes
- Purchasing? Yes
- Compensated time off? Yes

GRANTEE MONITORING

4. Are employees time sheets approved? [Yes](#)

By whom (what position)? [Employee and supervisor](#)

By the Executive Director? [Director and board representative](#)

5. Does the Grantee's payroll preparation and distribution involve more than one employee? [Yes](#)

6. Does an authorized official approve all checks before being signed?

[The Executive Director and Board Treasurer approve all checks](#)

Additional Comments:

[The grantee has been a recipient of the Positive Alternative Grant since 2006. They have been conscientious in keeping their PA records organized. They are now in the process as a Board of Directors and staff to review and write pertinent policy statements for their Center.](#)

GRANTEE MONITORING

PROGRAMMATIC QUESTIONS

Please use this space to answer all questions.

Program History

- When was your program started? Why was it started? Choices began offering Earn While You Learn in 2001 to provide support, information and material assistance to women in challenging pregnancy situations.
- What need does your program fulfill? Meets the need for pregnancy, childbirth and parenting education, emotional and practical support to help women carry pregnancies to term and prepare for parenting.
- How has the program grown or changed since its beginning? Starting EWYL attracted many new clients. When the Positive Alternatives grant was obtained in 2006, we were able to add a staff person specifically to coordinate that program, expand our hours and our space to better serve those clients. We have continued to improve and expand the classes available, update our materials, offer incentives, and receive training. We are now taking training to become certified life coaches so that this service may be offered as well to help clients become more self-sufficient and confident in their parenting and other areas of life.

Grantee's Target population

- Who does the organization primarily serve? Pregnant and parenting women in the surrounding Redwood Falls area, and their partners.
- What is the program's demographic and geographic coverage? Primarily Redwood and Renville County. Most clients come from a 30 mile radius of Redwood Falls.
- Review recent Demographic reporting. The majority of our clients are in their 20s and single. Most are Caucasian or Native American. It is common for them to start the program in the third trimester of pregnancy.

Leadership and Governance

- Effective Board: How many board members currently serve, who are they? Nine members come from various backgrounds, including education, ministry, business, finance, and agriculture. Seven female and two male members are part of the board of directors. The board has recently been working towards becoming a fully working board of directors.
- How often do they meet? How are they informed of organization's progress and challenges? The board meets every other month. The director's report is given at each meeting, summarizing challenges, statistics, and accomplishments.

GRANTEE MONITORING

- How supportive is the Board of the program? *Very supportive. We are getting stronger as we have been restructuring the board and reviewing policies to become more effective.*
- How is the program staffed? Who is responsible for the supervision of grant staff?
Director supervises EWYL coordinator and Manager of Online Communications. All are part time. Both director and EWYL coordinator have some hours with the grant and some through other programs.
 - How are staff evaluated on their performance? How long have PA staff been employed there? *Staff are evaluated by the director once a year, with individual goals being re-evaluated every six months. Director has been at Choices since 1992, and other staff since 2014.*
 - How are staff background checks done? *Through BCA or Christian Background checks*
 - What is your organization's policy on complaints for staff and clients? *Currently there is not a specific policy for this topic, but will be looked at this year by the board of directors and staff and is a work in progress.*

Budget

- Does the current budget reflect your work plan activities? *Yes*
- Is the budget accurate for the project size/scope? *Yes*
- Do you have any challenges with the budget or invoicing? *No*
- Has your Financial Reconciliation taken place? *No*
- If you have an elevated risk designation, and/ or your Financial Reconciliation report cited any concerns, these will be discussed.
Choices Pregnancy center is a medium risk designation and this was discussed at the visit. As a small rural PRC they have a large portion of their budget dependent on Positive Alternative funding.

Review Work Plan including:

Partners

- If applicable: how are people referred to the program? Are there any barriers encountered with referral sources? What is your most common referral source? *People are referred by local agencies, medical services, schools, public health, probation, social services, and by friends and relatives. Our website and social media inform and attract potential clients as well. Our largest referral source is friends who have been former clients. Human services is probably the second largest.*

GRANTEE MONITORING

- Challenges with partners or specific counties? *Difficult to keep everyone informed about our program when there is turnover. Networking and connections are crucial and must be kept up on a regular basis.*

Work Plan

- Review your 2016 – 19 grant application's description of the program you are asking to be funded. On your work plan note the services and activities you said you would provide and the number of clients you would serve.

Prepare a short summary of your current program(s) and the number of clients being served. How does what you describe in the application compare with what you are currently providing? Have any programs and/or activities or services been added or removed? Have the number of clients being served per quarter decreased or increased since June 2016? Is there anything in particular you want to share about your current program to explain its current status?

Positive Alternatives supports Choices Pregnancy Center's Earn While You Learn program, including staffing, office space, educational materials, training, and incentives. While continuing this program, we will be training to offer life coaching to our clients and will expand the resources we have available for fathers. At this time, our program is very much like the one described in the application. Nothing has been added or removed from our plan, although we may want to minimize the time frame in which we will complete our life coach training, if possible. Client numbers have been fairly steady. We are always working to improve our program so that we can offer quality education and services that clients find valuable and want to return for.

- Do you anticipate making any changes to the 2017-18 Work Plan? If so, in what way and for what reasons? *Not at this time*

Participants:

- What type of outreach does the organization put into action? What is working well? What are more the challenging aspects to finding or retaining clients? *We use social media posts and educational blogs to drive traffic to our website. We have seen our reach grow a great deal in this area, although it is difficult to know for sure how many clients actually find us because of this. We intentionally connect with other*

GRANTEE MONITORING

professionals through Redwood County Child Protection Team, Early Childhood Coalition, and other opportunities for personal contact. This helps to keep the program in front of others and remind them of the option to refer clients to us. We work hard to provide valuable services for our clients so they tell their friends about us. Many challenges make retaining clients difficult. Chaotic lives, unreliable transportation, health and employment issues, transient lifestyles, and changing situations all cause barriers at times. Clients usually appreciate and respond to texts that encourage them to reschedule a missed appointment or stop back in when they have been away for a while.

Data:

- How is program data collected and by whom? Is data collected useful to agency? [We use Ekyros Centerpiece to track clients' appointments and information.](#)
- Anything we can do to help or simplify data collection? [Not at this time](#)

Review Evaluation

- Your 2015-16 Evaluation Report Summary will be discussed (If you were a past grantee).
- Your 2016-17 Evaluation Plan will be reviewed. Any suggestions provided in your 2015-16 Report Summary should be included in the plan, if you are continuing a similar evaluation. If you are planning a new evaluation, details will be discussed. Do you have any questions on your evaluation? [No, not at this time.](#) [The grantee's 2016-17 evaluation project will use two outcomes, client's knowledge of domestic violence and nutrition education in the form of the promotion of breastfeeding. Choices is using a subcontractor for help with the design and consultation of the evaluation project.](#)

Miscellaneous

- Anything else you would like to share? [Not at this time](#)
- Anything else we haven't asked? [No](#)

What can we do to help?

- Trainings and Grantee meetings useful for grantee? Any topic suggestions?
- Feedback or suggestions for the state?
- Is there any way MDH can assist you to better equip your success in the Positive Alternatives Grant Program? [No feedback or suggestions at this time.](#)

GRANTEE MONITORING

Summary:

Choices Pregnancy Center has been a long time Positive Alternatives grantee providing a well-established pregnancy and parenting education program since 2006. They are centrally located in Redwood Falls in the lower level of the Armory Square building and are easy to access. Parking is ample. The Center is cheery and welcoming and has a beautifully stocked and organized baby boutique for clients. Counseling areas for clients are comfortable and private. The Center's website is effective in describing their own programs and mission. Choices PC also makes good use of social media by offering an informational blog with interesting and relevant posts on topics of interest to pregnant clients and/or women with infants. Although Choices has been established for some time, they are continuing to recognize the struggle it takes to keep connected to area partners and resources for client referrals. The challenge to keep contact open with area referrals can be difficult with staff turnover or organizational changes.

Choices PC has been a responsible and determined Positive Alternative grantee. They expect to work with their board of directors on revamping and writing new policy for the Center this next year. With recent changeover on the board, the current attitude by the board is one of doing not just supporting the Center. I look forward to our continued partnership with Choices PC as a Positive Alternatives grantee.

Date: November 18, 2016

Grant Manager: Mary Ottman